

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 5, 2006

For More Information Contact

VDH 06-53

Kelly Lobanov, Associate Director of Communications (804) 864-7553

Robert E. Croonenberghs, Shellfish Sanitation Director (804) 864-7477

**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CLOSES CHESAPEAKE BAY TO
SHELLFISH HARVESTING**

(RICHMOND, Va.)—The Virginia Department of Health announced today that the Virginia portion of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries from Smith Point at the mouth of the Potomac River to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel will be closed for shellfish harvesting due to severe weather associated with Tropical Storm Ernesto. The closure is effective Sept. 5 through 9, 2006.

“Monitoring shellfish harvesting beds is an important means to protect the health of Virginians,” said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H. “We watch shellfish beds for contaminants after major storms to ensure any seafood harvested there does not contain harmful substances that will make consumers of these shellfish ill.”

High tides and heavy rainfall may flood the upland area, potentially washing animal waste and human sewage into the Chesapeake Bay. Due to potential microbiological and chemical pollution hazards, shellfish taken from these areas at this time are presently unacceptable for direct marketing.

Ingesting shellfish taken from the Chesapeake Bay south of Smith Point at this time could cause gastrointestinal illnesses including Norovirus, hepatitis A and Shigella.

For more information about how to protect yourself and your family before, during and after natural disasters, visit www.vdh.virginia.gov/weather or the Virginia Department of Emergency Management’s Web site at www.vaemergency.com.

###